

What is claimed is:

1. A network backplane interface for a local network, comprising:
 - (a) a circuit board;
 - (b) a plurality of sockets connected to the circuit board for receiving plug-in network devices;
 - (c) power lines on the circuit board to one or more sockets for powering a plug-in network device in each socket;
 - (d) communication lines on the circuit board to each socket for communication with the plug-in network devices; and
 - (e) a housing for the circuit board, power lines and communication lines, including openings for exposing said sockets.
2. The backplane of claim 1, further comprising a communication controller which allows communication between the plug-in devices.
3. The backplane of claim 1, further comprising a configuration circuit on the circuit board which provides configuration of one or more plug-in devices.
4. The backplane of claim 3, wherein the configuration circuit communicates with a plug-in device in a socket to identify the plug-in device and configure the plug-in device for network communication.

1 5. The backplane of claim 3, wherein the configuration circuit
2 comprises:

3 (1) memory for storing configuration instructions for configuring one or
4 more different plug-in devices, and

5 (2) processor for executing the configuration instructions to
6 communicate with a plug-in device in a socket, and configure that device for
7 network communication.

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9 6. The backplane of claim 3, wherein the configuration circuit includes
10 a configuration memory having configuration information for a plurality of
11 predetermined plug-in device types.

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13 7. The backplane of claim 6, wherein the configuration circuit includes
14 extended configuration memory for storing configuration information for additional
15 device types.

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17 8. The backplane of claim 3, wherein the configuration circuit includes
18 an embedded configuration module to configure plug-in devices in a
19 configuration session.

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21 9. The backplane of claim 8, wherein the configuration module
22 configures all plug-in devices in one configuration session.

1 10. The backplane of claim 9, wherein the configuration module
2 comprises a platform-independent configuration software.

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4 11. The backplane of claim 9, wherein the configuration circuit provides
5 a user interface for receiving user configuration commands.

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7 12. The backplane of claim 1, wherein at least one socket is dedicated
8 to connection and communication with an external network.

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10 13. The backplane of claim 12, further including a switch for connecting
11 a security module between said socket for external connection, and the local
12 network.

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14 14. The backplane of claim 13, further including a connection for
15 bridging a security module between said socket for external connection, and the
16 local network.

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18 15. The backplane of claim 1, wherein a socket comprises a RJ-45
19 socket.

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21 16. The backplane of claim 1, wherein a socket comprises a proprietary
22 connector combining power and data connections.

1 17. A network backplane interface for a local network, comprising:
2 (a) a plurality of sockets for receiving plug-in network devices;
3 (b) power lines to one or more sockets for powering a plug-in network
4 device in each socket;
5 (c) communication lines to each socket for communication with the
6 plug-in network devices; and
7 (d) a configuration module for configuration of one or more plug-in
8 devices, wherein the configuration module communicates with each plug-in
9 device in each socket to identify the plug-in device and configure the plug-in
10 device for network communication.

11
12 18. The backplane of claim 17, wherein the configuration module
13 comprises:

14 (1) memory for storing configuration instructions for configuring one or
15 more different plug-in devices, and

16 (2) processor for executing the configuration instructions to
17 communicate with a plug-in device in a socket, and configure that device for
18 network communication.

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20 19. The backplane of claim 17, wherein the configuration module
21 includes a configuration memory having configuration information for a plurality of
22 predetermined plug-in device types.

1 20. The backplane of claim 19, wherein the configuration module
2 includes extended configuration memory for storing configuration information for
3 additional device types.

4
5 21. The backplane of claim 17, wherein the configuration module
6 provides configuration of plug-in devices in a configuration session.

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8 22. The backplane of claim 21, wherein the configuration module
9 configures all plug-in devices in one configuration session.

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11 23. The backplane of claim 22, wherein the configuration module
12 comprises a platform-independent configuration software.

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14 24. The backplane of claim 22, wherein the configuration module
15 provides a user interface for receiving user configuration commands.

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17 25. A network interface module for a local network, comprising:
18 (a) a plurality of sockets for receiving plug-in network devices;
19 (b) power lines to one or more sockets for powering a plug-in network
20 device in each socket;
21 (c) a switch connected to each socket allowing communication with the
22 plug-in network devices; and

1 (d) a configuration module for configuration of one or more plug-in
2 devices, wherein the configuration module communicates with each plug-in
3 device in each socket to identify the plug-in device and configure the plug-in
4 device for network communication.

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6 26. The network interface module of claim 25, wherein the
7 configuration module comprises:

8 (1) memory for storing configuration instructions for configuring one or
9 more different plug-in devices, and

10 (2) processor for executing the configuration instructions to
11 communicate with a plug-in device in a socket, and configure that device for
12 network communication.

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14 27. The network interface module of claim 25, wherein the
15 configuration module includes a configuration memory having configuration
16 information for a plurality of predetermined plug-in device types.

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18 28. The network interface module of claim 27, wherein the
19 configuration module includes extended configuration memory for storing
20 configuration information for additional device types.

1 29. The network interface module of claim 25, wherein the
2 configuration module provides configuration of plug-in devices in a configuration
3 session.

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5 30. The network interface module of claim 29, wherein the
6 configuration module configures all plug-in devices in one configuration session.

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8 31. The network interface module of claim 30, wherein the
9 configuration module comprises a platform-independent configuration software.

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11 32. The network interface module of claim 30, wherein the
12 configuration module provides a user interface for receiving user configuration
13 commands.

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15 33. The network interface module of claim 25 further comprising a
16 backplane for the sockets, power lines, switch and configuration module.

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18 34. The network interface module of claim 33 wherein the backplane
19 comprises a printed circuit board.